

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed on November 19, 2003, has been reviewed and the comments of the Patent and Trademark Office have been considered. Prior to this paper, claims 1-21 were pending in the present application, with claims 20 and 21 being withdrawn from prosecution. By this paper, Applicants cancel claims 1, 9 and 17 without prejudice or disclaimer. Therefore, claims 2-8, 10-16, and 18-21 are now pending in the present application.

Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance for the reasons that follow.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank Examiner Shewareged for indicating that claims 3-8, 11-16 and 19 are allowable in view of the prior art.

Entry of the Above Amendments Is Respectfully Requested

Claims 2, 3, 5, 18, 19, 20 and 21 are amended as seen above. The amendments to claims 3, 5 and 19 merely represent the placement of these claims into independent form. The amendments to claims 2, 18, 20 and 21 merely represent a change in the dependency of these claims from cancelled claims to claims indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Therefore, none of these amendments require a new art search to determine the allowability of the claims, and, therefore, should be entered.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1, 2, 9, 10, 17 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being variously anticipated by Breckwoldt (USP 5,166,333), Koch I (USP 3,840,395), Koch II (USP 3,899,452).

In response, Applicants have cancelled claims 1, 9 and 17 without prejudice or disclaimer, and changed the dependency of claims 2, and 18 to depend from claims 3 and 19, respectively, claims 3 and 19 being indicated as containing allowable subject matter. Claim 10 is now ultimately dependent from claim 3, a claim that is indicated as being

allowable, and therefore, the rejection of claim 10 should be withdrawn. Applicants respectfully request allowance of the application in view of these amendments.

Request for Rejoinder of Withdrawn Claims

Claims 20 and 21 were withdrawn in the outstanding Office Action. Applicants note that claims 20 and 21 depend from claims 3 and 19, respectively. Applicants respectfully request that the PTO rejoin and reconsider claims 20 and 21 since, due to their dependency from allowable claims, no additional art search is necessary to determine the patentability of these claims.

Conclusion

Applicants believe that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 19-0741. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 19-0741.

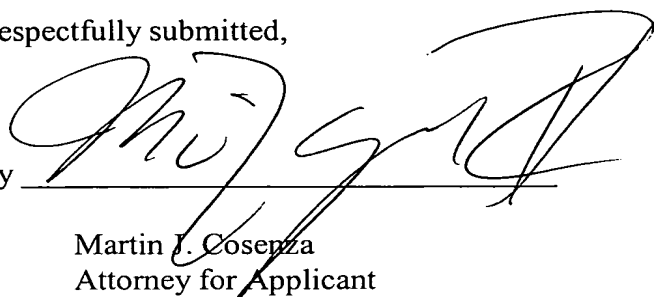
Examiner Shewareged is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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